amar chitra katha

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KANNAPPA

THE DEVOTEE WHO OFFERED HIS EYES TO LORD SHIVA



An increasing number of kings in South India began to patronise Jainism after the fifth century A.D. In the North too, traditional Hinduism was on the decline, especially after Harsha embraced Buddhism. The revival of Hinduism was made possible not only by the great intellectual debates of Shankaracharya in the eighth century A.D., but also by the emotional content provided by the Bhakti (devotion) movement of the Nayanars, the Shaiva saints, and the Alvars, the Vaishnava saints.

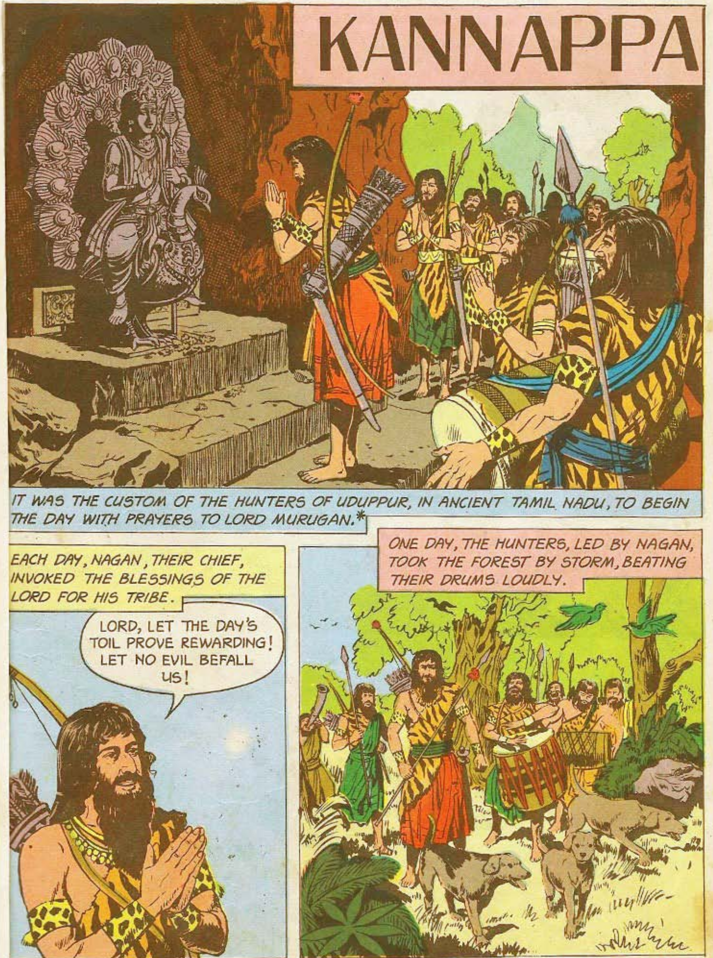
Like Buddhism and Jainism, the Bhakti movement advocated an egalitarian outlook, teaching that all those who worship the Lord are equal in His eyes. Both the Nayanars and the Alvars were simple-hearted devotees. They expressed their feelings in songs which are easy to comprehend and yet deeply moving.

The story of Kannappa Nayanar is told in the *Periya Puranam* in Tamil. In preparing this Amar Chitra Katha, material has also been drawn from the Kannada prose work, *Ragale* by Harihara.

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KANNAPPA



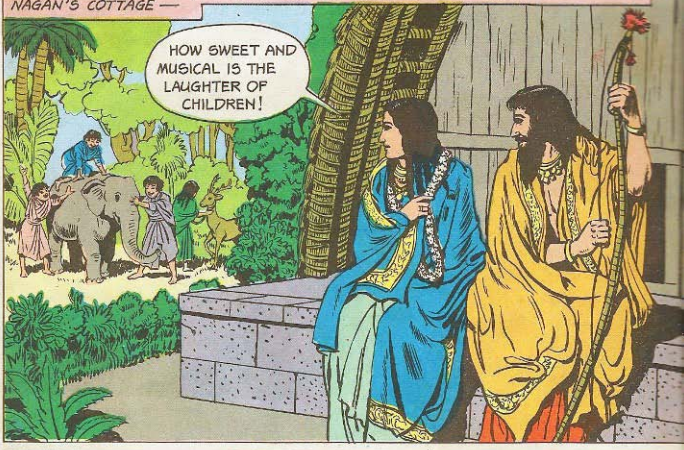
* ANOTHER NAME FOR LORD KARTTIKEYA (SON OF SHIVA) ALSO KNOWN AS SUBRAHMANYA

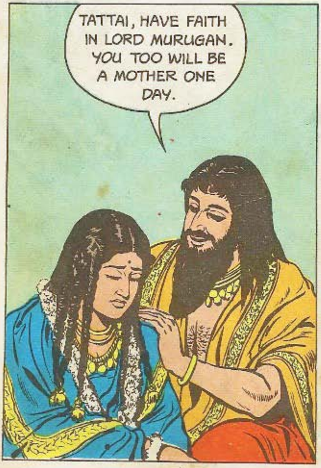

TERRIFIED BY THE DIN, THE ANIMALS CAME OUT OF HIDING AND BEGAN TO RUN...
...WHILE THE HUNTERS FOLLOWED, SHOOTING ARROWS AND HURLING SPEARS AT THEM.
MANY ANIMALS FELL, VICTIMS OF THE WELL-AIMED ARROWS AND SPEARS.
TAKE THESE TO THE VILLAGE.


BUT SOME ANIMALS ESCAPED THIS CRUEL FATE.
DON'T HARM THE DEER AND THE BABY ELEPHANT. CAPTURE THEM. THEY WILL MAKE GOOD PLAY-MATES FOR OUR CHILDREN.

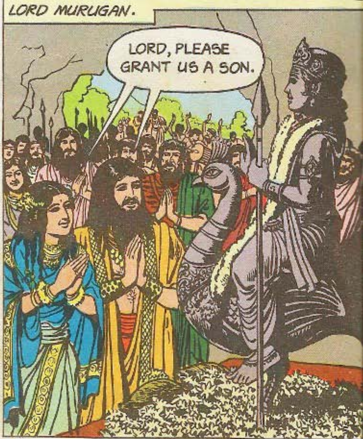

WHEN THE HUNTERS RETURNED HOME TRIUMPHANTLY, THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN RECEIVED THEM JOYFULLY.

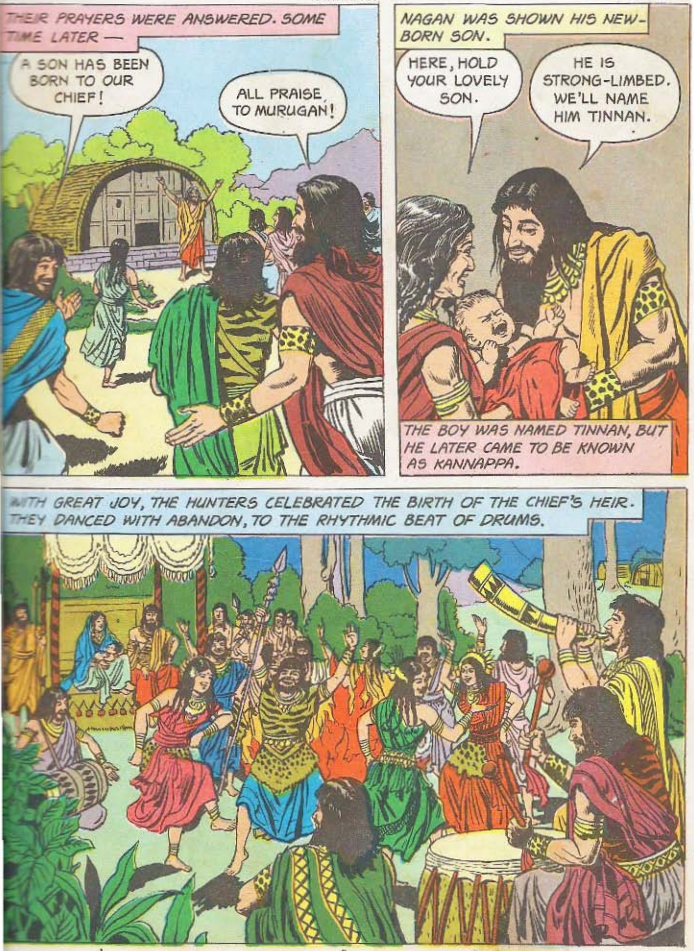
AS THE CHILDREN PLAYED WITH THE CAPTURED ANIMALS IN FRONT OF NAGAN'S COTTAGE —





NAGAN ARRANGED A FESTIVAL TO PROPITIATE LORD MURUGAN.



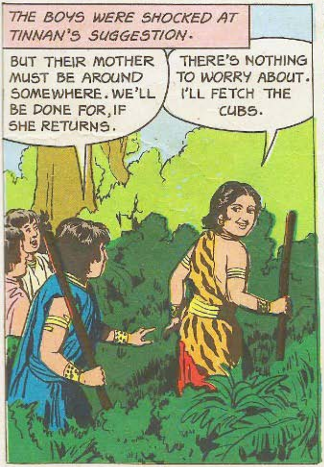

THEIR PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED. SOME TIME LATER —
A SON HAS BEEN BORN TO OUR CHIEF!
ALL PRAISE TO MURUGAN!
NAGAN WAS SHOWN HIS NEW-BORN SON.
HERE, HOLD YOUR LOVELY SON.
HE IS STRONG-LIMBED. WE'LL NAME HIM TINNAN.
THE BOY WAS NAMED TINNAN, BUT HE LATER CAME TO BE KNOWN AS KANNAPPA.
WITH GREAT JOY, THE HUNTERS CELEBRATED THE BIRTH OF THE CHIEF'S HEIR. THEY DANCED WITH ABANDON, TO THE RHYTHMIC BEAT OF DRUMS.


TINNAN GREW UNDER THE LOVING CARE OF HIS PARENTS.
HIS STRENGTH IS EXTRAORDINARY.


WHEN TINNAN WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD —
FATHER, TAKE ME WITH YOU. I'LL JOIN IN THE HUNT.
SON, YOU ARE STILL TOO YOUNG. WAIT TILL YOU GROW UP.

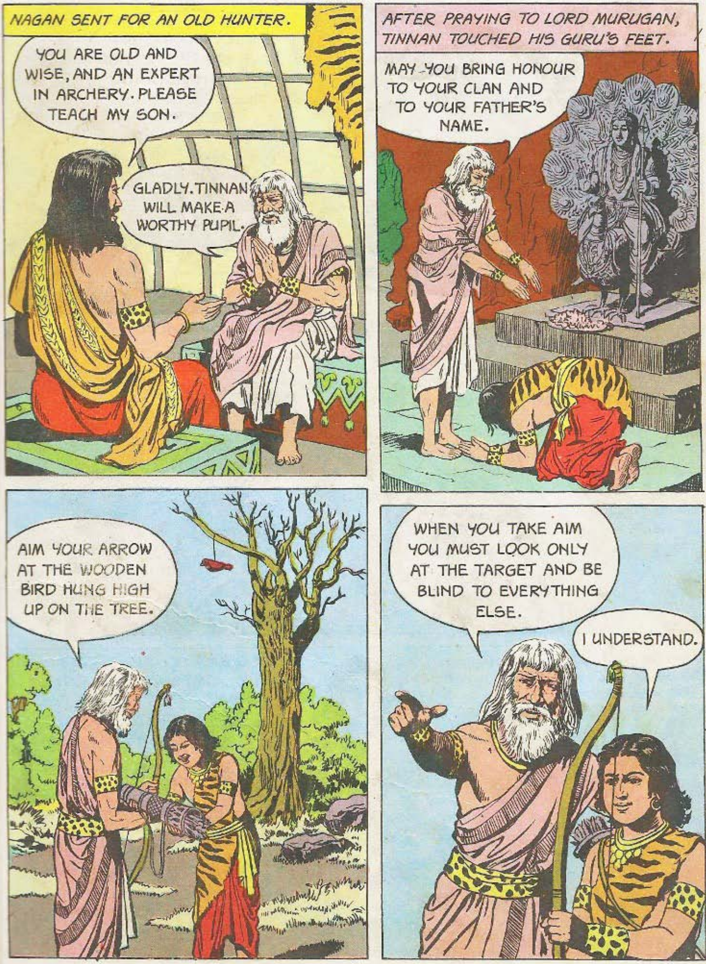

AS NAGAN AND THE OTHERS LEFT —
IF OUR FATHERS DON'T TAKE US, WE WILL HUNT ON OUR OWN.
A GOOD IDEA!
LET US START AT ONCE.


ARMED WITH STICKS AND STONES, THE BOYS SET OUT FOR THE FOREST —
LOOK, TIGER CUBS!
LET'S CATCH THEM.


THE BOYS WERE SHOCKED AT TINNAN'S SUGGESTION.
BUT THEIR MOTHER MUST BE AROUND SOMEWHERE. WE'LL BE DONE FOR, IF SHE RETURNS.
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. I'LL FETCH THE CUBS.




WHEN NAGAN AND HIS MEN RETURNED THAT EVENING THEY WERE IN FOR A PLEASANT SURPRISE.
FATHER, YOU'VE BROUGHT BACK A DEAD TIGER. BUT, LOOK, WE'VE BROUGHT BACK LIVE ONES! THREE OF THEM!
YOU ARE A CLEVER LAD, MY SON. I AM PROUD OF YOU.
TINNAN WILL BE A GOOD AND EFFICIENT CHIEF WHEN HE GROWS UP.
YES, HE IS BRAVE AND FEARLESS.
MY SON HAS STRENGTH BEYOND HIS YEARS. I MUST START TEACHING HIM ARCHERY.


NAGAN SENT FOR AN OLD HUNTER.
YOU ARE OLD AND WISE, AND AN EXPERT IN ARCHERY. PLEASE TEACH MY SON.
GLADLY. TINNAN WILL MAKE A WORTHY PUPIL.
AFTER PRAYING TO LORD MURUGAN, TINNAN TOUCHED HIS GURU'S FEET.
MAY YOU BRING HONOUR TO YOUR CLAN AND TO YOUR FATHER'S NAME.
AIM YOUR ARROW AT THE WOODEN BIRD HUNG HIGH UP ON THE TREE.
WHEN YOU TAKE AIM YOU MUST LOOK ONLY AT THE TARGET AND BE BLIND TO EVERYTHING ELSE.
I UNDERSTAND.

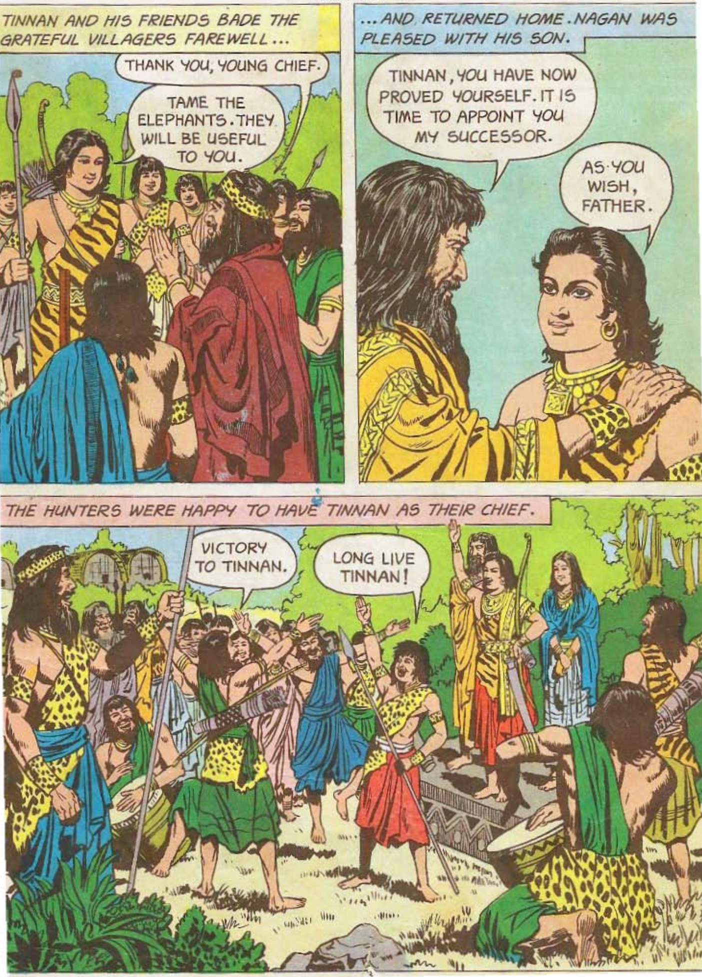

BRAVO, TINNAN! YOU HAVE SHARP EYES AND STEADY HANDS. YOU WILL BE A GOOD ARCHER.
TINNAN PRACTISED HARD AND BECAME AN EXPERT ARCHER. HE ALSO LEARNT HOW TO WIELD THE SPEAR AND THE SWORD.


WHEN TINNAN WAS ABOUT SIXTEEN YEARS OLD, SOME VILLAGERS APPROACHED HIS FATHER.
NAGAN, WILD ANIMALS ARE DESTROYING OUR CROPS AND CATTLE. PLEASE COME TO OUR HELP.
I AM GETTING OLD. I WILL SEND MY SON, TINNAN.


TINNAN AND HIS COMPANIONS ACCOMPANIED THE FEAR-STRICKEN VILLAGERS.
NOW, GO BACK TO THE SAFETY OF YOUR HOMES, AND LEAVE THE ANIMALS TO US.


SUDDENLY —
GR-RR-R
TINNAN HAS KILLED THE TIGER!
WELL DONE, TINNAN!
NOW WE MUST CAPTURE THE ELEPHANTS.
TINNAN'S COMPANIONS DUG LARGE PITS...
...AND COVERED THEM WITH TWIGS, GRASS AND BANANA LEAVES.
THE ELEPHANTS WILL FALL INTO THE PITS BELOW WHEN THEY WALK OVER THE LIGHT COVERING!


THEN THEY BLEW THEIR HORNS AND BEAT THEIR DRUMS, MAKING A TERRIBLE DIN.
THE FRIGHTENED ELEPHANTS RAN ABOUT BLINDLY...
...AND FELL INTO THE PITS.

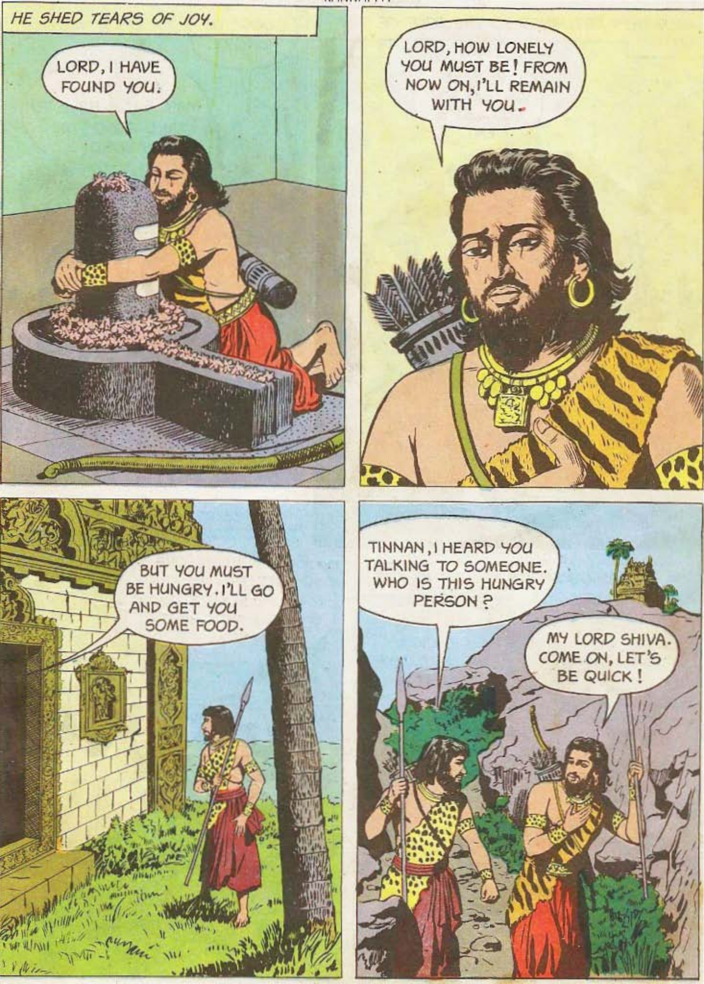

TINNAN AND HIS FRIENDS BADE THE GRATEFUL VILLAGERS FAREWELL...
THANK YOU, YOUNG CHIEF.
TAME THE ELEPHANTS. THEY WILL BE USEFUL TO YOU.
...AND RETURNED HOME. NAGAN WAS PLEASED WITH HIS SON.
TINNAN, YOU HAVE NOW PROVED YOURSELF. IT IS TIME TO APPOINT YOU MY SUCCESSOR.
AS YOU WISH, FATHER.
THE HUNTERS WERE HAPPY TO HAVE TINNAN AS THEIR CHIEF.
VICTORY TO TINNAN.
LONG LIVE TINNAN!

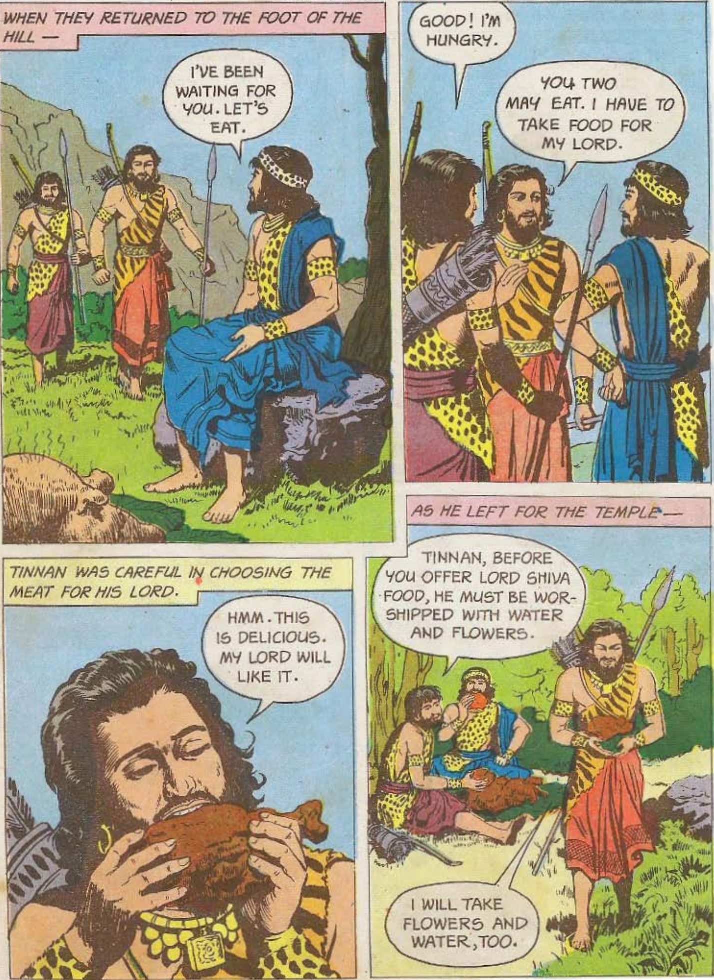

THE YEARS ROLLED BY. ONE MORNING TINNAN WENT TO THE FOREST WITH HIS COMPANIONS, NANAN AND KADAN.
YOU HAVE SET THE SNARES VERY CLEVERLY, TINNAN.
WE WILL COME BACK AT NOON AND SEE IF ANY ANIMALS HAVE BEEN TRAPPED.
AT NOON, WHEN THEY RETURNED —
LOOK, A BOAR HAS BEEN CAUGHT IN THE SNARE.
HURRY UP! IT IS TEARING DOWN THE SNARE.
BEFORE THEY COULD REACH HIM, THE BOAR HAD BROKEN LOOSE AND HAD ESCAPED. THE THREE HUNTERS FOLLOWED IN CLOSE PURSUIT.

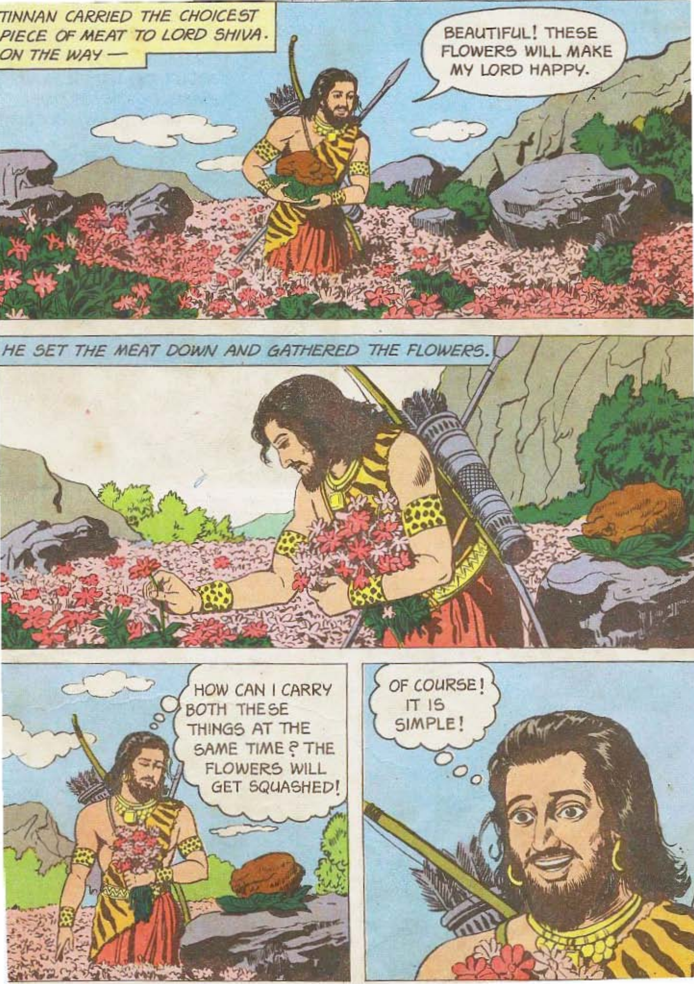


* IN ANDHRA PRADESH

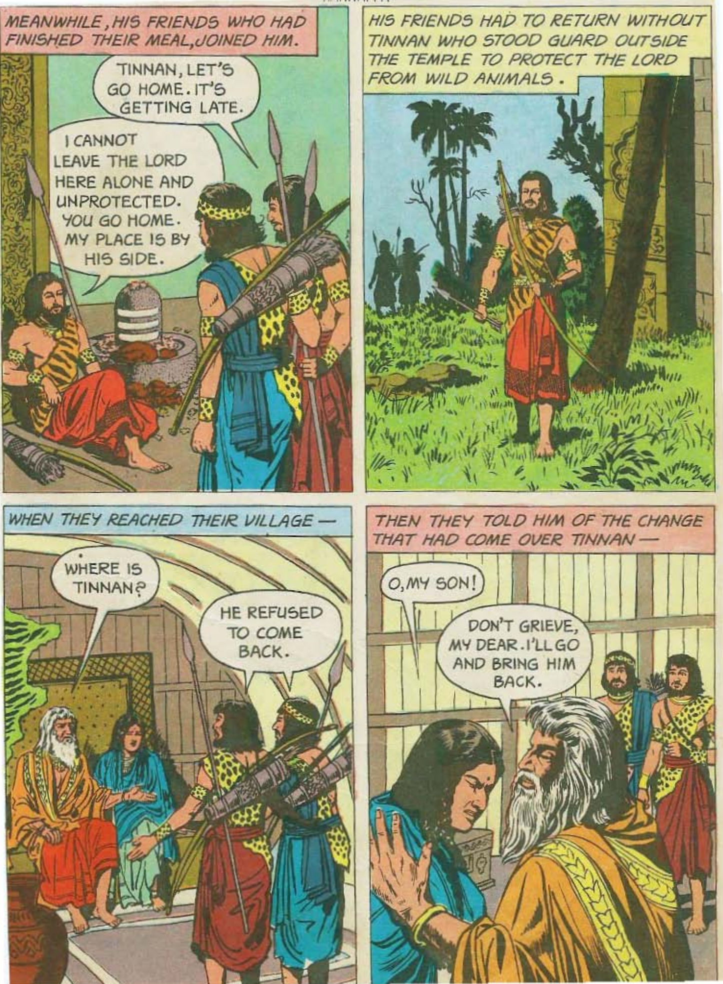

AS THE TWO CLIMBED THE HILL —
NANAN, SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO ME.
WHY DOES MY HEART FEEL SO LIGHT AND JOY-FUL ?
SUDDENLY HE BROKE INTO A RUN.
TINNAN IS RUNNING TO THE TEMPLE OF LORD SHIVA. WHY IS HE IN SUCH A HURRY ?
WHEN TINNAN ENTERED THE TEMPLE, HE WAS OVERWHELMED BY DEVOTION.
LORD!

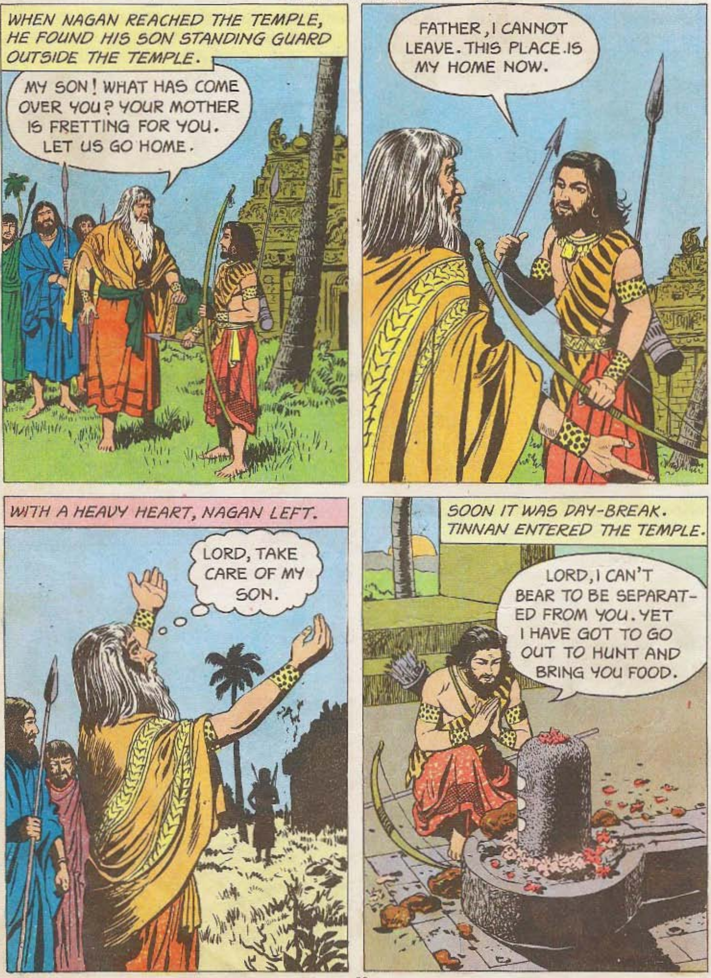

HE SHED TEARS OF JOY.
LORD, I HAVE FOUND YOU.
LORD, HOW LONELY YOU MUST BE! FROM NOW ON, I'LL REMAIN WITH YOU.
BUT YOU MUST BE HUNGRY. I'LL GO AND GET YOU SOME FOOD.
TINNAN, I HEARD YOU TALKING TO SOMEONE. WHO IS THIS HUNGRY PERSON?
MY LORD SHIVA. COME ON, LET'S BE QUICK!


WHEN THEY RETURNED TO THE FOOT OF THE HILL —
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. LET'S EAT.
GOOD! I'M HUNGRY.
YOU TWO MAY EAT. I HAVE TO TAKE FOOD FOR MY LORD.
TINNAN WAS CAREFUL IN CHOOSING THE MEAT FOR HIS LORD.
HMM. THIS IS DELICIOUS. MY LORD WILL LIKE IT.
AS HE LEFT FOR THE TEMPLE —
TINNAN, BEFORE YOU OFFER LORD SHIVA FOOD, HE MUST BE WORSHIPPED WITH WATER AND FLOWERS.
I WILL TAKE FLOWERS AND WATER, TOO.

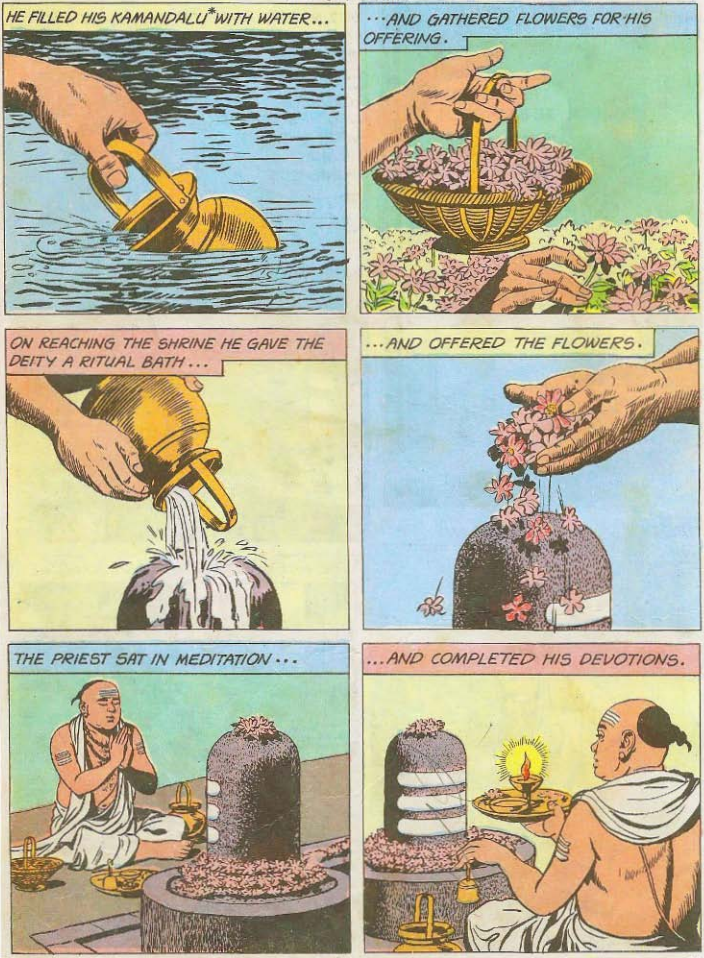

TINNAN CARRIED THE CHOICEST PIECE OF MEAT TO LORD SHIVA. ON THE WAY —
BEAUTIFUL! THESE FLOWERS WILL MAKE MY LORD HAPPY.
HE SET THE MEAT DOWN AND GATHERED THE FLOWERS.
HOW CAN I CARRY BOTH THESE THINGS AT THE SAME TIME? THE FLOWERS WILL GET SQUASHED!
OF COURSE! IT IS SIMPLE!


WITH THE MEAT IN HIS HANDS AND FLOWERS IN HIS HAIR, HE WENT ON.
AGAIN HE STOPPED WHEN HE SAW A STREAM.
I HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE WATER. HOW SHALL I CARRY IT? OF COURSE, IN MY MOUTH....
WHEN HE REACHED THE TEMPLE, HE BATHED THE LINGA WITH THE WATER FROM HIS MOUTH.
THEN HE DECORATED THE LINGA WITH THE FLOWERS FROM HIS HEAD AND PLACED THE MEAT BEFORE THE LORD.
LORD, I HAVE BROUGHT YOU THE TASTIEST PIECE OF MEAT. PLEASE ACCEPT IT.


MEANWHILE, HIS FRIENDS WHO HAD FINISHED THEIR MEAL, JOINED HIM.
TINNAN, LET'S GO HOME. IT'S GETTING LATE.
I CANNOT LEAVE THE LORD HERE ALONE AND UNPROTECTED. YOU GO HOME. MY PLACE IS BY HIS SIDE.
HIS FRIENDS HAD TO RETURN WITHOUT TINNAN WHO STOOD GUARD OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE TO PROTECT THE LORD FROM WILD ANIMALS.
WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR VILLAGE —
WHERE IS TINNAN?
HE REFUSED TO COME BACK.
THEN THEY TOLD HIM OF THE CHANGE THAT HAD COME OVER TINNAN —
O, MY SON!
DON'T GRIEVE, MY DEAR. I'LL GO AND BRING HIM BACK.

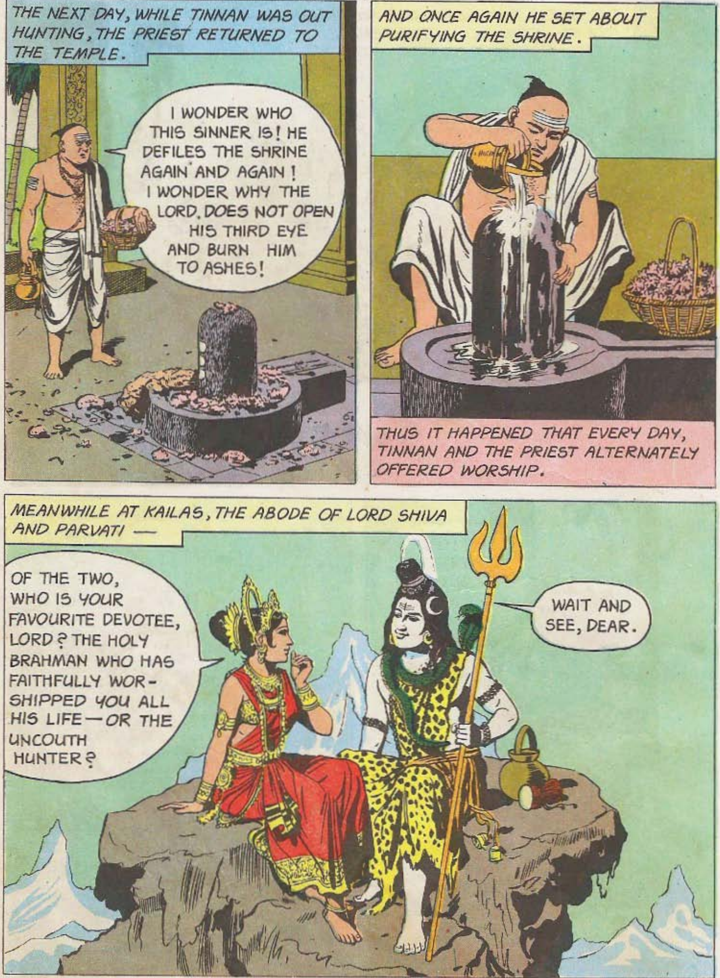

WHEN NAGAN REACHED THE TEMPLE, HE FOUND HIS SON STANDING GUARD OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.
MY SON! WHAT HAS COME OVER YOU? YOUR MOTHER IS FRETTING FOR YOU. LET US GO HOME.
FATHER, I CANNOT LEAVE. THIS PLACE IS MY HOME NOW.
WITH A HEAVY HEART, NAGAN LEFT.
LORD, TAKE CARE OF MY SON.
SOON IT WAS DAY-BREAK. TINNAN ENTERED THE TEMPLE.
LORD, I CAN'T BEAR TO BE SEPARATED FROM YOU. YET I HAVE GOT TO GO OUT TO HUNT AND BRING YOU FOOD.

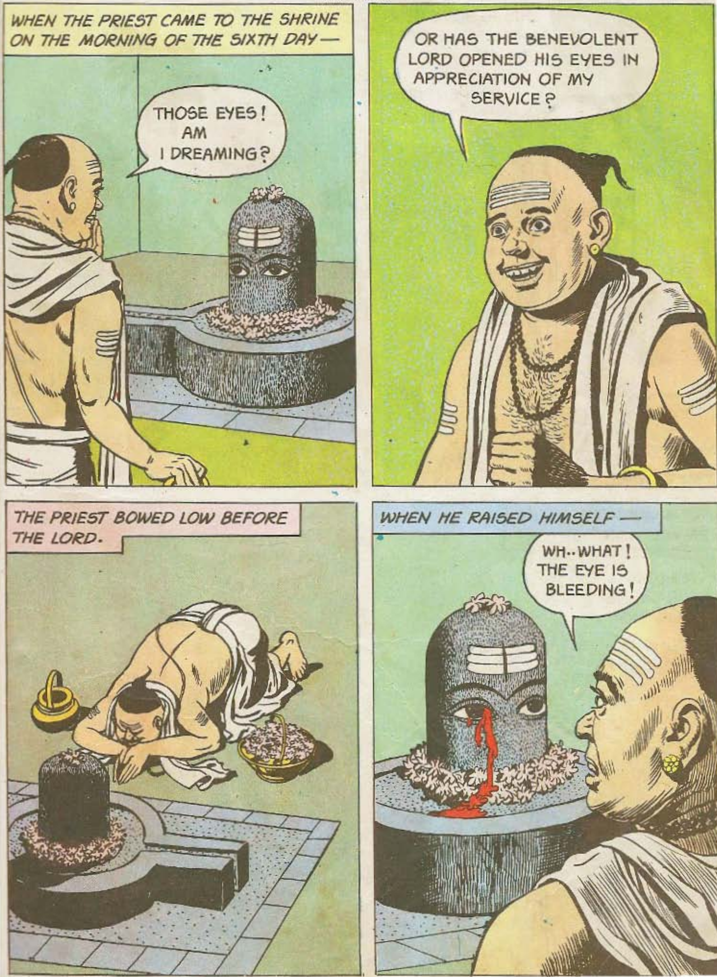

I PROMISE TO BE BACK SOON.
IN TINNAN'S ABSENCE THE PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE ARRIVED. HE WAS SHOCKED TO SEE THE OFFERINGS OF MEAT IN THE TEMPLE.
LORD OF ALL LORDS, WHO HAS DEFILED YOUR SHRINE? HE MUST BE PUNISHED!
THE PRIEST STARTED CLEANING THE SHRINE.
THEN HE WENT TO THE LAKE TO BATHE.

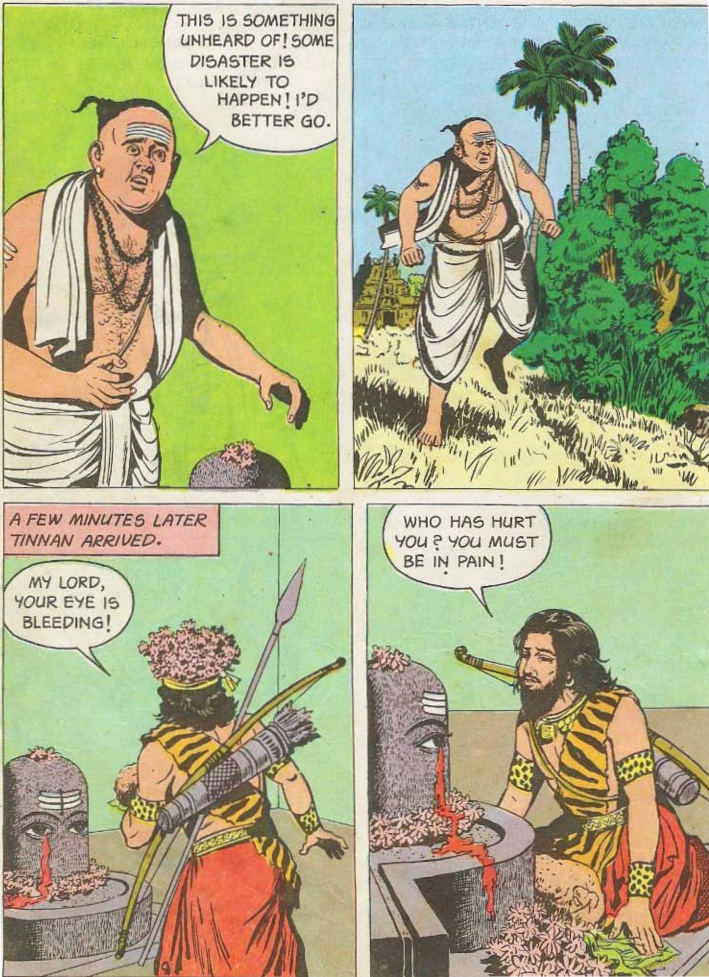

HE FILLED HIS KAMANDALU* WITH WATER...
...AND GATHERED FLOWERS FOR HIS OFFERING.
ON REACHING THE SHRINE HE GAVE THE DEITY A RITUAL BATH...
...AND OFFERED THE FLOWERS.
THE PRIEST SAT IN MEDITATION...
...AND COMPLETED HIS DEVOTIONS.

* A WATER POT


THE PRIEST THEN LEFT JUST AS TINNAN, UNNOTICED BY HIM, RETURNED TO THE TEMPLE.
MY LORD! TODAY I'VE BROUGHT YOU MEAT COOKED IN HONEY!
HE REMOVED THE FLOWER OFFERING OF THE PRIEST AND STARTED HIS WORSHIP.


THE NEXT DAY, WHILE TINNAN WAS OUT HUNTING, THE PRIEST RETURNED TO THE TEMPLE.
I WONDER WHO THIS SINNER IS! HE DEFILES THE SHRINE AGAIN AND AGAIN! I WONDER WHY THE LORD DOES NOT OPEN HIS THIRD EYE AND BURN HIM TO ASHES!
AND ONCE AGAIN HE SET ABOUT PURIFYING THE SHRINE.
THUS IT HAPPENED THAT EVERY DAY, TINNAN AND THE PRIEST ALTERNATELY OFFERED WORSHIP.
MEANWHILE AT KAILAS, THE ABODE OF LORD SHIVA AND PARVATI —
OF THE TWO, WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE DEVOTEE, LORD? THE HOLY BRAHMAN WHO HAS FAITHFULLY WORSHIPPED YOU ALL HIS LIFE — OR THE UNCOUTH HUNTER?
WAIT AND SEE, DEAR.


WHEN THE PRIEST CAME TO THE SHRINE ON THE MORNING OF THE SIXTH DAY —
THOSE EYES! AM I DREAMING?
OR HAS THE BENEVOLENT LORD OPENED HIS EYES IN APPRECIATION OF MY SERVICE?
THE PRIEST BOWED LOW BEFORE THE LORD.
WHEN HE RAISED HIMSELF —
WH.. WHAT! THE EYE IS BLEEDING!


THIS IS SOMETHING UNHEARD OF! SOME DISASTER IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN! I'D BETTER GO.
A FEW MINUTES LATER TINNAN ARRIVED.
MY LORD, YOUR EYE IS BLEEDING!
WHO HAS HURT YOU? YOU MUST BE IN PAIN!


DON'T BE AFRAID, LORD. BEAR THE PAIN FOR A WHILE. I'LL BE BACK SOON.
HE WENT OUT...
...AND RETURNED WITH HERBS, OF WHICH HE PREPARED A PASTE. THIS HE APPLIED TO THE AFFECTED EYE.
THERE, THIS WILL MAKE YOU WELL AGAIN.
BUT —
THE BLEEDING HASN'T STOPPED. WHAT SHALL I DO TO RELIEVE YOUR SUFFERING, LORD?
AH, MY EYE! LORD, I WILL GIVE YOU MY EYE.
TINNAN GOUGED OUT ONE OF HIS EYES...


...AND REPLACED THE LORD'S BLEEDING EYE WITH IT.
LORD, DO YOU FEEL BETTER NOW?
LORD YOU ARE CURED! I AM SO HAPPY.
BUT TINNAN'S JOY WAS SHORT-LIVED.
OH! THE LEFT EYE HAS BEGUN TO BLEED!
BUT I KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW. I WILL GIVE YOU MY OTHER EYE, LORD.


HE HESITATED FOR A MOMENT.
BUT, LORD; WHEN I TAKE OUT MY OTHER EYE, HOW WILL I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE IT?
TINNAN FOUND A WAY OUT. HE PLACED HIS FOOT ON THE LEFT EYE OF THE LORD, TO MARK THE PLACE.
AS HE GOT READY TO TAKE OUT THE OTHER EYE —
TINNAN, STOP! MANY HAVE PRAYED TO ME FOR SIGHT. BUT ONLY YOU HAVE OFFERED ME YOUR EYES.
THE NEXT MOMENT, TINNAN'S SIGHT WAS FULLY RESTORED. HE STOOD WITH FOLDED HANDS BEFORE HIS BELOVED MASTER.
PEERLESS KANNAPPA,* COME WITH ME TO KAILAS, WHERE YOU SHALL EVER BE BY MY SIDE.
LORD, I AM TRULY BLESSED.

* EYE-SAINT


A BED TIME STORY
GRANDMA, TELL ME A STORY.
ALL RIGHT.
LONG LONG AGO THERE LIVED A KING CALLED DASHARATHA.
HE HAD...
...FOUR SONS!
THAT'S RIGHT. BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW?
I READ AMAR CHITRA KATHA!

